

Lake Austin home burns, antiques lost

By James T. Munoz
American-Statesman Staff

A northwest Travis County resident lost his two-story home, valuable paintings, and an antique collection he said was worth more than \$400,000 in a fire Friday afternoon.

Austin Fire Department and Travis County Fire Control units responded to the blaze at 2305 Manana St. at 1:57 p.m. Friday.

Austin Fire Department firefighters brought the fire under control 45 minutes later, said Bob Pitts, Austin Fire Department battalion chief.

Pitts said the fire had spread to the entire house when firefighters arrived, and they had to prevent the fire from spreading to an adjacent house. Winds caused the fire to scorch the side wall of the house at 2303 Manana St. and flames were as high as 60 feet, Pitts said.

James Clark, owner of the house which overlooks Lake Austin, said he lost 60 paintings, two grand pianos, an organ, and a decoy duck collection in the blaze. Also destroyed was a pickup parked in the garage.

"I am grateful that no one was killed and that my neighbor's house was not burned and my wife is safe. I am not happy about losing my place. I have a very empty feeling about that," said Clark, an Austin insurance agent.

Clark, 61, said he was at his office when he received a phone call from a neighbor that his house was ablaze. He said his wife had gone shopping an hour before the house caught fire.

Mike Noe, Austin Fire Department investigator, said the cause of the fire had not been determined.

Clark said he and his wife, Esna Beth Clark, 60, had lived alone in the house and would probably temporarily move in with one of their two children in Austin.

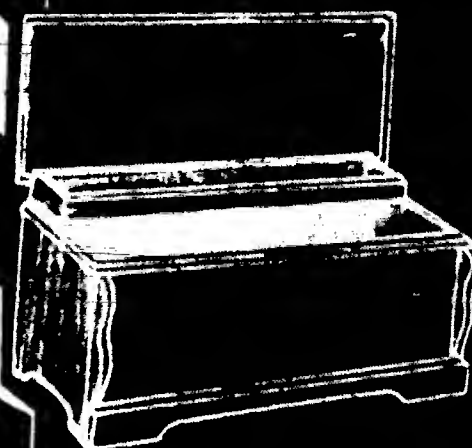
Fifteen neighbors helped Pat Smith, of 2303 Manana St., get her belongings outside when the fire threatened her home.

"There was a time when they (firefighters) thought my house was going too," Smith said. "I tried to keep my wits about me and did what needed to be done."

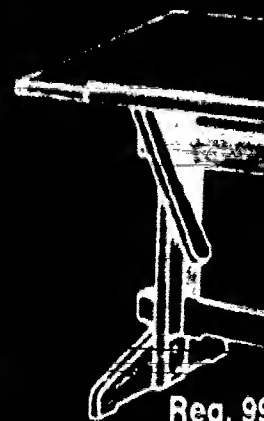
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